

Bryant Powell has been selected as the 2016 Pinal Region First Things First Champion for Young Children.

The award is given to local champions who actively volunteer their time to raise public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health. Champions spend a significant amount of time volunteering with FTF and building public awareness about the importance of early childhood issues.



Powell engaged in awareness-raising efforts such as:

- talking with policymakers about FTF's efforts in early childhood education.
- engaging his local Rotary Club to learn about the importance of early childhood.
- Volunteering on the FTF finance committee.
- Securing a City of Apache Junction Proclamation declaring the Week of the young Child, April 10-16.

We recently caught up with Powell, who serves as Apache Junction's City Manager.

Question: Why do you feel early childhood development and health is so important?

Answer: The investment and care we make as adults in our children can't have a price tag on the return of the change that is made in the life of a child. I feel I want to do all I can to help out. So we can help those that are most vulnerable so they won't be left behind. In the business world we are constantly seeking out the most talented workforce we can find. Preparation starts with early childhood literacy and wellness.

Q: What caused you to get involved in efforts to increase public awareness in early childhood issues?

A: I started as a volunteer member for the FTF Pinal Regional Partnership Council. It was a time when all three of my kids were under the age of 5. I recognized the importance of their needs: consistent and constant love, nourishment – physical, spiritual, and educational—and I wanted to do all I could to ensure that all of our Pinal kids had the same.

Q: Why do you feel building awareness in early childhood and developmental health is so important for families and communities?

A: I have a City Council member that often says, "You can't sell a secret." How else is our community going to learn about the importance of early childhood development and health?

Q: How have you seen awareness for the early years change in your community?

A: My sense is that culturally people understand more about the difference between day care or babysitting and early childhood development and preparation for kindergarten.

Q: How do you suggest other people in your community get involved?

A: People understand that our society needs an educated workforce with livable wages and jobs to support their families. We need educated people and learning starts at birth. We need to keep the dialog going, wherever one or more are gathered. People need to be aware of the importance of high school graduation and how that is going to impact themselves and their families in the future.